

Rick Loomis PBM - HOUSE RULES

(Terms of Service)

This is a copy of our HOUSE RULES dated August, 2021. This information is for everyone who plays in Rick Loomis PBM's play by mail games. There are a few very important rules which apply to all games. A free printed copy of this is available to anyone who asks for "a copy of the house rules". We realize that a lot of this stuff sounds picky, or like we're trying to cause you problems, but each of these rules comes from a problem that has occurred in the past. If we were just selling shoes, we would just do whatever is necessary to keep you happy, but in a pbm game, when it comes to things like missed turns or mistyped orders, we have to also be fair to the OTHER players in the game. They have a right to expect (for instance) that we won't retroactively correct a mistake that you made. It is our goal to remain completely transparent, so that the game is between you and the other players. Unfortunately, things happen where we have to intervene, or make a decision not to intervene.

Dropping out of a game: When you join a pbm game, you are not buying a subscription that you can cancel merely by not responding anymore, and not paying for it. There are other people involved in your game, and you have an obligation to them and to us to let us know if you have decided not to continue the game. All we ask is a postcard (or a short phonecall or email) with your name, account number, and the game number, saying "Drop me from this game". You can drop out of any game at any time for any reason. You don't have to tell us why (although we would like to know); just TELL US! Not everyone who misses a turn wants to drop out of the game, nor everyone who forgets to send payment. (Note: if you send one more set of orders, along with instructions to "drop me after this turn", you will be charged for that turn and it will be mailed to you, but we will drop you after processing it.)

Prices: All prices, including set up fees and the turn fees of games in progress, are subject to change without notice. We will attempt to inform everyone well before any increase, but cannot guarantee it. You may be joining a game which will continue for 2 or 3 years. We have to keep up with inflation, so please forgive us if we have to raise a price or two occasionally.

The Game Number: We are currently running several hundred different games simultaneously. It is very important that you always put the correct game number on every turn you send in, and on any letters about that game. If you have a question or complaint about a particular game, you must mention the game number. If you tell us the wrong game number, or if you don't mention the game number at all, we may not be able to process your turn (or question). The name of the game is part of the game number.

Due Dates: We will process a game on the morning after the due date, or whenever all the turns arrive, whichever comes first. If you get your turn to us after 6 PM on the due date, but before we process the turn (and bring it to our attention) we will include your turn. We normally wait until after we receive the day's mail on the morning after the due date, and check EMAIL that morning also, before processing turns.

Address Changes: This is VERY important. If you have an address change, write it on a separate card or on one of your account sheets (the one that tells you how much is left in your account). You can include the change in a letter with a game turn, but PLEASE do not write it on your turn sheet or expect us to notice it on the return address on your envelope. The address change and turn sheet go to two different places for processing, and the envelope is discarded early. Tell us the DATE the change is effective. If the change is only temporary, tell us what date you will be returning to the old address, and be sure to tell us what the old address was. Please don't try to tell us which TURNS of your game should be mailed to a temporary address. Tell us the DATES. There might be a long delay of some kind, and we would not know

which address to mail your turns to. Whatever date you tell us will be the day we make the change on our computer file. Turns processed & billed on that day will be sent to your new address. You can call us in the morning with an address change, and turns processed that afternoon will be mailed to the new one. However, due to the length of time it sometimes takes the post office to forward mail or return mail with an incorrect address, we cannot afford to be responsible for turns lost in the postal service. Likewise if you change your EMAIL address, be sure and tell us. Don't expect us to notice it automatically. If you SEND your turn from a new address, your receipt will go back to that address, but your turn will go to the address on file.

Your Account: Your account is where we will keep track of your money, your address, your career game ratings, and all of your business transactions with us. When you join your first game, you will be assigned an account number. That number will be the same in every game you play with us and it will be yours forever. We will put your account number on the top of all your game printouts. You should put this number on all of your turnsheets, as well as on every payment or request. We also keep track of you by name, so it is very important that you include both your name and your account number on everything you send us. If someone else writes a check for you, make sure that YOUR name and account number are on the check. Your account will also have a SECURITY CODE on it made of 5 letters spelled out in the military alphabet (Foxtrot, Zulu, Xray, Hotel, etc.). You will need this security code if you call us with a phone in turn or change, or any questions about your game. You can change this to any five letters you want; just let us know. Each time we send you a turn, we will send you an additional computer sheet containing your name, address, recent account activity, and current account balance. The turn fee and any extra charges for that turn are charged at the time the printout is made. The date at the top of the printout is the date your account was in that exact condition. If you ever have any questions or problems with your account, we will be able to solve them most quickly if you can send us a copy of the account/address sheet that shows the problem. If you quit playing, the balance in your account will be refunded when you ask for it. If you don't ask for it, we will hold it as long as necessary until the next time you join one of our games. Set-up fees sent to start new games usually will not be added to your account, but will be held to reserve your place in the upcoming game. Please note that you owe us the turn fee for each turn of the game that we mail to you until either you are eliminated, or until you notify us that you are no longer interested in playing that particular game. If you miss the turn, it still costs us money to process and mail the results to you, even if we didn't have to type your orders into the computer. Your turn fee is your estimated share of the costs of processing the game, including overhead. If we mail your turn, but it never arrives, we will feel sorry for you, but we cannot run the turn again and we must charge you for it. Our expenses are still the same. You can call us at 480-945-6917 just about any time of day (even late at night) and ask us when the next turn of your game is due, when we mailed the last turn, or whether your orders have arrived here yet. (Remember your security code!) Note also that if you are getting your turn by email, the turn and the account sheet are sent separately, and since the account sheet is shorter, it may get to you faster.

Payment: Please do not pay for turns one at a time. Send us a check or money order for \$10 or more at a time. Do not send cash! Always be sure that both your name and your account number are written somewhere on the front of the check. If the check is for something other than your account, include a note telling us what it is for. If you do not tell us what a payment is for, we will just add it to your account. Please look at each of your address/account printouts when you get them so you can tell when you are getting low on funds. Be sure you send money soon enough so that your account will not go negative. Remember that it may take us 3 or 4 days after getting your check before we can get it onto our computer and into your account. (Address changes and game turns, however, are processed immediately. So if you send a check with a game turn, the money might not show up on your account until the

NEXT turn.) Do not send payments in non-US funds. Our bank charges us to exchange currencies and we will, in turn, charge you a hefty markup. Canadian players should be aware that they may purchase money orders in US funds at their local post office. Any time you send us \$100 or more at a time, we will put \$5 extra into your account as "special credit". This is if the entire \$105 is spent on Rick Loomis PBM games and services. (Not counting convention fees.) If you later ask to have all or part of the \$100 refunded to you, we'll probably cancel the \$5 bonus. If you wish to pay by credit card, we accept Master Card, VISA, Discover, Diners Club and American Express. Be sure & give us the card number and expiration date, and how much money you want us to add to your game account. (We won't charge individual turns to your credit card—you have to pick an amount and have us add it to your game account, preferably \$30 or more). If you are want us to automatically charge a pre-arranged amount to your credit card every time your account balance gets low, ask us for "Auto Bankcard Info". We also accept Paypal - send your payment to postmaster@rickloomispbm.com (however if you are using a credit card we would rather charge your card directly, as our bank charges us a lower percentage than paypal does.)

Warnings: All game turns are supposed to be paid for in advance, and it is your responsibility to make sure we receive payment before time to process the turn. If your account goes negative, we reserve the right to drop you from the game. We will probably give you some extra time to pay, but don't count on it all the time, and we also reserve the right to charge you a "late fee" for letting your account go negative. If you miss several turns in a row, or if you miss even one turn while owing us money, we will begin to wonder if you have decided to stop playing without telling us (some players do that, unfortunately). We may then send you an official warning that if you miss the next turn, you will be dropped from the game. If you don't want to be dropped, be sure and call us BEFORE the next turn is due. If you receive a warning from us by mistake, please don't take offense. Unfortunately we have to send out a lot of them and we're only human. A quick phone call & we can get it all straight.

Cheating: In any multi-player game there is a certain amount of back-stabbing. Players will often try to trick each other or lie to each other in an attempt to gain an advantage. Most of this is just part-of-the-game, and we will NOT try to mediate such disputes between or among players. However, cheating is defined as trying to trick the moderator (Rick Loomis PBM) in some way. It is cheating to sign another player's name to a diplomatic message that you expect us to forward. It is cheating to communicate with another player in an anonymous game or tell other players which anonymous games you are in. It is especially cheating to try to mail or phone in another player's turn (or turn change) without his permission or knowledge. Some people sign up for games using a pseudonym, either to avoid having their real name appear in the ratings, or to keep former enemies from recognizing them. This is OK, AS LONG AS YOU TELL US. Tell us that you want to start a new account under the name John Smith, but that your real name is Joe Jones. We will make a notation on our computer to avoid putting the two in the same game together. If you do manage to get two positions in the same game, and we find out, we will assume you were TRYING to cheat, and we will drop both positions from the game. It is cheating to play two positions in the same game, unless it is a multi-game specifically set up this way. If you want to turn your position over to another player, it can NOT be someone else playing in the game. We have had cases where someone wanted to drop out, but someone else paid him to stay in the game so that the person paying for both positions can get an extra advantage in the game. It is perfectly OK to help your allies any way you want to, but it is NOT OK to quit playing and let your ally run your position for you. Those who cheat may be dropped from the game involved, or even from all the games they are playing, with no refund, and they may lose the right to ever play in our games again! If you know someone who is cheating, we want to know about it so we can protect the vast majority of fair players from a few spoilsports.

Phoned-in Turns: If you are going to be late getting your turn in, we will accept your turn over the phone. This is an extra service which we provide and it is not included in your turn fee. Therefore there is an extra charge. Most people who are sending their turns at the last minute now use email, we do not have an answering machine. We no longer have a fax. If you need to ask a question about your game, you can call 480-945-6917 seven days a week. We will not accept collect phone calls. If you send express mail, please sign the space that says "it's OK not to get a signature" [and please don't send turns in any manner that requires a signature on this end] (otherwise it may delay the letter while they put a message in our box to come to the window to sign for the letter), and please buy an express mail postage stamp to put on the letter instead of letting them use the postage meter. (Hey, we have some stamp collectors here.)

Electronic Mail: If you have access to a computer with a modem, you should be able to send your turn in via electronic mail. We check our email at least a couple times a day. If you would like more information, write and ask for info on EMAIL. If you are already a subscriber to one of these services, send an email addressed to "formatturns@rickloomispbm.com" which will automatically reply with a message about how you should format a game turn so that we can automatically process it for you. Send your turns to "games@rickloomispbm.com". (or "turns@rickloomispbm.com - it doesn't matter which.) And the first time you do, be sure to ask us to put you on the "EMAIL mailing list". Note that we always send a "receipt" back by email when we receive an email turn. (We usually read email at around 10:30AM, and send the receipts out by noon. This is not an automatic process so don't expect the receipt to come back by return mail.) If you don't get it, you need to call us. (IMPORTANT: If you don't get the receipt, don't send us an email asking whether we got your turn. SEND THE TURN AGAIN. It doesn't cost anything if we get two or more copies of your turn. If we get ready to run your game, and all we have from you is an email saying "Did you get my turn?" it is too late for us to email you and say "No, we didn't get it. Please send it again.") Don't "delete" the receipt from your mailbox until you receive your next turn. There have been some problems with email not getting delivered (both from us to the customer, and from the customer to us.) If you don't receive your turn when you expect it, or you don't get a receipt within 24 hours, you MUST call us. If your turn never gets to us, there is nothing we can do. Note that for some games (WWBP and Starweb) if you send your turn in by email, and you are scheduled to get your results by email, if your turn has been received by 9 AM on the due date we will send you an order echo notifying you of any errors the computer has detected, or letting you know that we haven't received a turn yet. This is automatic, and at no extra charge. (Be sure to check out our webpage at: <http://www.rickloomispbm.com>. It includes a list of how many people are waiting for each kind of game.) Note that you may have the turns for any of the games sent to you by email. (If you want it BOTH by email and postal mail, there is an extra charge.)

Changes to your turn: If you have already mailed in your turn and you have second thoughts about some of your orders, AND THE GAME HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN PROCESSED, you can make changes. But there is an extra charge, and we will not be responsible for errors made due to a change. (Again, this is a place where it is very easy for errors to creep in.) (Remember, if all the turns come in early, we may have processed the turn already.) It is best to just send the entire turn in again, with the corrections made. If you insist on just sending in the changes, we will do our best to make the change the way we think you want it, but if there are any discrepancies, you are stuck with whatever we guessed. And you MUST tell us the security code that appears on your address sheet. Otherwise we don't know whether it's really you. Submitting an entirely new turn doesn't cost extra. If you send in more than one turn, be sure and tell us which one to use! On the 2nd one, write "use this instead of the one I mailed yesterday". If you do not tell us which one to use, we will attempt to use the last one we got. And please note that your enemy can phone in a change to his turn

up to the moment the turn is actually processed on the computer, even if it is after the due date. So don't call up your enemy the day after the due date and gloat about how you stabbed him. Wait until you get your printout in the mail.

Errors on your turn: If you think we've made an error on your turn, let us know about it. But send in your next turn anyway. With your next turn, describe the problem and why you think there is an error. If you wish, you may include two versions of your next turn—one to be used if we correct the error and the other to be used if we don't. The main reason for this is that it may not be an error. Over half of the "errors" that people complain about turn out to be a misunderstanding of the rules. And if that happens, we will NOT hold up the game waiting for your turn. If it was our mistake (other than a phoned in turn or change), we will try to correct it if we can. But we always reserve the right to declare a mistake the "Fog of War" or an "Act of God" (i.e., nobody's fault) if it turns out to be too difficult to correct, and instead give you credit for two free turns. Please remember that you are not being discriminated against. We do not make errors on purpose. It is just as likely to happen to your opponent. If we promised to do every turn perfectly, we would have to increase our prices a lot and slow down the games a lot! And sometimes an error cannot be corrected without being unfair to someone else. If your turn sheet includes a space for "order count" or "number of orders" it is important that you count how many orders you have written. Our computer tells us how many we typed, and it if says 32, but you wrote "33" on your order count, we will go back and look for the missing order. This solves a LOT of potential problems and saves you having to call and ask for a correction! Remember that if you phone in your turn, or if the error is due to sloppy handwriting on your part, or an inaccurate or missing order count, we won't correct the error. If you decide to change an order before you send it in, CROSS IT OUT and rewrite it. If you try to change a "zero" to a "six" and we type in the wrong number, we have to leave it the way it was typed. And if you make a change to a turn after it is already sent in, we don't promise to make the correction or get it right. Change your mind at your own risk! No error corrections will be made more than one turn later in the game. In all cases, our liability is limited to two free turns. We try to be perfect, but sometimes Murphy interferes!

Ending a game: In certain games (for instance, Starweb, Battle Plan, and WW), if your position is totally destroyed, we will NOT automatically drop you from a game. We'll keep mailing you printouts until YOU tell US that the information you are getting is no longer worth the turn fee. We won't try to make that decision for you. All you have to do is send us a postcard or email with your name, the game number, your account number, and ask to be dropped from the game.

Turns late coming back from us: Don't panic. Note that the due date is calculated from the day we mail the turn to you, not from the last due date (except for all email games). Also remember that a player could phone in his turn as late as 6 PM on the day it was due, so we can't even START processing the turn until the next day UNLESS ALL THE PLAYERS GET THEIR TURNS IN EARLY (seldom happens). Then the game has a lot of processing steps to go through. We almost always get a turn out the day after it is due. But feel free to call or email if your turn is several days overdue.

Postal/Email problems: Flying Buffalo is not in any way responsible for the functioning of the US Post Office, the Canadian Postal Service, the US Armed Forces Postal Service, or any other post office or email service anywhere in the galaxy. If your turn gets to us late, or not at all, there is very little we can do. YOU have to be responsible for making sure we received your turn. It is unfair to the other players to let you submit a turn after you have seen the results of their orders, even if you swear that you didn't change the orders you originally sent. It doesn't matter when you SENT it, if we didn't GET it, you have missed the turn. Please see "Phone Alert" below. If you've sent a payment & it is seriously

overdue in getting credited to your account, call us. (But wait until you receive the next turn after the one when you sent the money, as it may have been credited right after the turn was processed.) If you

miss a turn because it arrived late, and you want us to use that turn for your next turn, or if you want us to go ahead and deliver the diplomatic messages with your next turn, be sure & let us know exactly what you want. You can mail us a copy of your turn in addition to the original. If you mail the two envelopes separately, there is very little chance that BOTH will be lost or delayed. But please write "copy" on all copies so we don't waste time trying to figure out which one is the turn change! You can keep a copy of your turn, call us on the due date to see if we have received it (we never run turns until AFTER the due date if there are any turns missing), and if we have not received it yet, you can phone your turn in. See the section on phone in turns.

PHONE ALERT: We do have a "phone warning" service where we call you if your turn isn't here by the due date. This is an extra service which costs us time & money so we charge for it. But we only charge you if we have to call you. Ask for a "phone alert" form to fill out. If your problem is you didn't get the turn we mailed to you, you can for most of the games order Extra Printouts. You can order an Extra Printout for a turn we have already mailed, for a specific upcoming turn (to be mailed to a vacation address, for instance), or for every turn in a game. There is a fee for this (see "extra charges"). (If we sent your turn to you by email, and it is less than 30 days from the time it was originally sent, we can send it again for no charge.) We generally will NOT lengthen the turnaround time of a game already in progress (or delay a game merely because you request it) as that is unfair to the other players. But if you request a "slow" game when you sign up, we can give you due dates of one month instead of the usual two weeks. If none of these things helps, we apologize, but there is nothing we can do. We cannot just wait until your turn arrives however long it takes, even if you have "never missed a turn before". We don't know that, and there is almost always SOMEONE missing the turn for many various reasons. We cannot re-run a turn just because you missed it, even if you mailed your orders a week early. We do suggest that you file an official complaint with the post office, (or the Email service) but that's all we can do. If you missed the turn, you've missed it. A couple times a year we get someone who misses the turn who "has never missed a turn in ten years" but who thought signing up for "Phone Alert" was too expensive! If we never have to call you, IT DOESN'T COST A CENT! And if we DO call you, and you think we shouldn't have, we can always cancel the charge. But we cannot change the fact that you missed the turn, once you have missed it.

Censorship: Many different kinds of people from all ages and walks of life play these games. What one person considers a friendly insult, another may consider obscene. We reserve the right to censor or delete obscene or objectionable diplomatic messages, speech orders, and world news. Sorry if that annoys you, but we have no obligation to mail anyone's obscenities to our customers.

Special Charges for Extra Services: Note, these are the current prices for these services as of the date of this printing. they are subject to change without notice, although we will always try to announce price changes before putting them into effect. Phoned in turn: \$2 for SW, BP, WW, GC, MO. 50 cents per ship for RL. \$1 for others. Multiweb, 1/2 the turn fee extra. Phoned in change to a previously submitted turn: \$3. Mailed in change: \$2. Submitting completely redone turn with changes: No charge. Sending your turn to you by Email instead of postal mail: no extra charge. Sending it to you by both email and postal mail: \$1 (\$1.50 for WW). Creating extra printout: \$5. Overseas airmail: extra. Bounced check returned to us by your bank: \$45. Payment not made in US funds: at least \$1, more if charged more by our bank or yours. Phone Alert call: \$10

Flying Buffalo Quarterly:

Private Games: are available for all games. If you are interested,

ask for our letter on private games.

A Playing Hint: If you have never played this kind of game before, remember one primary thing: the purpose of these games is entertainment. Treat your opponents like ladies & gentlemen and expect the same from them. The word is “diplomacy”. You may be planning to rend his empire limb from limb, but don’t TELL him that. In Starweb (for instance) there are 14 players other than yourself. You can’t defeat them all. Communicate. Write. Make alliances. Otherwise you are missing most of the fun. Thank you for participating in our games. Note that although we call this play by MAIL, most players now send and receive their turns by email. It is the recommended way to play. In a game with diplomacy, you will be at a disadvantage if you can’t communicate with email. Note that if you join a game of World Wide Battle Plan, you should tell us if you want us to tell all the other players your email address on turn one.

Free games: If you’d like to try a game for free, you can sign up for RIFTLORDS or the Starweb “Trial Game.” If you sign up for Riftlords, you get the first three turns free automatically. Just tell us the names of your three ships, and whether you want to be in the weekly game, the two week game, or the monthly game. The Trial game of Starweb is a smaller version of the real game. There are only 6 players (one of each character type), the map is smaller, and it only goes for 12 turns. One of the players is an experienced player designated the “mentor”. It is recommended that you get in touch with the mentor right away. Just tell us what code name you want to use (up to 9 letters, no spaces or punctuation), and give a preference for character type. We’ll need your name, address, and email address.

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